

2 Peter 1:3-11

“A Fruitful Life of Patience”

This story appeared in the *Men of Integrity* devotional by Mark Geil: “My father is a gifted carpenter. When I was young, I spent many hours with him carrying lumber or fetching his tools. I learned the name of every tool in the box, and what they’re for. Dad’s retired now. He and Mom sometimes come to visit so he can help me with a project: building steps from our deck or a new piece of furniture. I’m still learning from him.

“Especially about patience. In the time it takes him to carefully measure and cut every board just right, my mind races ahead, dreaming up more ‘efficient’ ways to speed up the process. I have to stop and ask myself why. Those hours with Dad are a blessing, and I know from experience that his slow, steady methods are better than mine. Nevertheless, I often feel impatient.

“Patience isn’t natural,” he writes. “It’s supernatural. It’s an outgrowth of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives! We can’t assemble patience on our own, and frequent impatience is often a signal that we’re not fully connected with God’s presence in our lives. When I think about Dad’s patience, I’m even more grateful for God’s patience when I’m sure I know a better way.” (Feb. 6, 2007; Mark Geil)

Patience. This is the Fruit of the Spirit listed in the Bible that probably challenges more of us than any other! [Sermon Series: Fruit of the Spirit; Galatians 5:22-23 – Love. Joy. Peace. Patience. Kindness. Generosity. Faithfulness. Gentleness. Self-control.]

Patience is more than putting on a nice face in a not-so-nice moment when someone hurts you. Patience is a supernatural fruit, something that begins to blossom in you because of your time spent in the Lord! As you experience unexpected delays or criticism from people, God can grow His fruit in your hearts so that you respond to hurt or criticism with patience.

Patience. Kindness. Love.

“Patience means waiting without anxiety.” (St. Francis of Sales) Do you get that?

Someone once said, “The key to everything is patience. You get the chicken by hatching the egg, not by smashing it open!” (Arnold Glasgow)

Impatience is usually defined as: an irritation with anything that causes delay; a restless desire for change and excitement

To be impatient is to feel and show hostility towards things which obstruct or delay your goals. Impatient people resent being held up, whether intentionally by another person or just accidentally in the normal course of events.

Who do you think demanded that children’s shoes be fitted with velcro? It must have been a mother after holding her hands back as her five-year-old tried for the fifty-third time in a row to make the little bunny ears to loop into a shoelace bow, while stubbornly puffing, “I can do it myself!”

This “patience” which the Spirit of God nurtures in us has to do with *loving* in the way God loves!

But listen to a sad example from a husband who wonders what to do when his wife’s rambling seemed annoying. In his book, *The Christian Husband*, Bob Lepine questions what to do when you ask her about her day and she tells you – in 3-D Technicolor, including all the highlights and the footnotes! You get links to other sites from her brain along the way. And all the time you’re thinking, “Will you please land this plane! What’s your point?”

And a wife believes the world would be fine if all men showed as much patience all the time as they do while waiting for fish to bite! (Vaughn Monroe)

The root of impatience is usually selfishness. We're not getting what we want or what we think we deserve. We don't suffer long. We think we've suffered enough!

Should we be reminded: **Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.** (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

But we're talking about a god-like love!

So how do we come to patience? Or, how is patience grown in our lives?

The Fruit of the Spirit, the pulse and purpose of God growing in us, grows only in relationship to the Gardener, who is God! We have to *want* Him to grow in us. We have to *allow* the Lord of Life to grow in us.

The Bible says we don't attain or access His fruit, but we "receive it!"

READING 2 Peter 1:3-11

³ By His divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know Him, the one who called us to Himself by means of His marvelous glory and excellence. ⁴ And because of His glory and excellence, He has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share His divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

⁵ In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

⁸ The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

¹⁰ So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. ¹¹ Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

When we read the Bible, we can't mistake the two contradictory and incompatible ways of living! The Bible teaches us that there is life in the flesh and life in the Spirit. The Bible uses the phrase "life in the flesh" as a symbol for sin or wickedness. This is who we were, born into the world, born with a sin nature; with a tendency to ignore and reject God. It was for this reason Jesus said, "You have to be born again!"

So God is teaching us, as those who have come to believe in Jesus, to separate ourselves from our former way of sin. [vs. 4]: God intends that you escape "**the world's corruption caused by human desires**" in order to share in His divine nature! What is God's divine nature? I think we would include the fruit of the Spirit on which we're focusing!

And how do you focus on His divine nature? [vs. 5]: You are directed to "support your faith" with goodness and knowledge and self-control and patient endurance and godliness and

love! This passage is naming at least four of the fruits of the Spirit in our preaching series!

So we experience a spiritual transformation from darkness to light, from death to life, as we “supplement our faith” with these traits. You make a conscious effort to practice these qualities. And the irony is that as we practice love, joy, peace, and patience, they are fertilized by the Lord in that they take root and grow strong! [vs. 8]: **The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

But this kind of growth demands effort! [vs. 10]: **Work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen.** You see, you wouldn’t make the effort towards these godly qualities unless the Spirit of God is nudging you there in the first place!

As believers, we’re adopting a Christian World-View! With Christ in you and Christ in me, we separate ourselves from the ways and the attitudes of the world, and I’m talking about separating ourselves from the thoughts of fear and jealousy and envy and resentment and greed or lust and !!the impatience that keep us from caring and loving in the Christ-like way!

Pastor Gordon MacDonald wrote about the internal battle with patience. “I am standing in line at the post office and feeling this impatience. I used to think of myself as a patient man, but now I’m not so sure. I find a flicker of irritability rising in me at other times, too: when everyone else decides to clog up the interstate at the same time I wanted to use it; or when someone sends me an e-mail file that takes ten minutes to download. I have a suspicion that these bits of impatience really echo other aspects, maybe more significant aspects, of my life that I refuse to face.

“So I push myself to stop and think about my idiotic, immature reaction. Why am I upset because I’m going to lose four or five minutes in my schedule? What’s the deeper impatience? Where’s the anger coming from?

“This moment in the line becomes an instructor for my character. There will be moments ahead when this ‘fruit of the Spirit’ will be needed for far greater issues than this one. Learn patience here (in the line at the grocery store) so that you’ll have it” when more patience is demanded!

If we go back to the place where the Fruit of the Spirit is listed, the Bible tells us, **Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** (Galatians 5:24) In a very real way, a spiritual way, Christians are putting to death the old passions of the flesh as Christ comes alive in them! We crucify these “passions and desires” first, through prayer, confessing these worldly passions or desires – envy, jealousy, impatience – as sin, as we implore the Spirit of Christ to reclaim our lives!

Then, all the saints who have lived and written on the topic tell us, “Continue in this daily conversation with God!” Prayer. Confession. Praise. Petition. Live as though you are in the constant presence of God, because you are! Live as though the Holy Spirit wants to form your Spirit, because He does! (This is a faith posture!)

We can’t pretend that patience will come all of the sudden, in one great moment. As with the fruit of love and joy and peace, we *receive* this nature as fruit that grows from God as we “empty” ourselves – as we crucify the flesh – of the passions and desires of the flesh.

Doesn’t this conflict between patience-impatience identify clearly the one battle, the spiritual battle, that determines who reigns as Lord in your heart? Is it Jesus – or is it you? Because when we fail with patience, we fail at loving, because my impatience is all about *me* and

what *I* want – and not much about what you want!

So we fail; can we agree? Yes. But we have another gift from God; another gift we need. I'm talking about grace! Mercy! Forgiveness! Love!

Let's not think of God as the principal at the head of the class just waiting to catch you in one more stupid thing! No, our heavenly Father will do everything in His power to nurture the Fruit of His Spirit inside you.

And so that constant conversation between me and God may sound like a bumbling child who's trying to express my frustration that I'm sorry! "I'm trying, Lord, but I fail so often! I want to do better because I know that to live with Your love and patience is better for me and for those around me! I want to treat others the way You treat me. To offer grace and kindness, patience and love. I'm not perfect; I'm far from it! I know what You know about me; I know that there are times when I just want to be lazy and to have my own way ...so I'm asking You to forgive me. And I'm thankful that You're more willing to forgive than I would be! I'm thankful that You love me, and that Your love is undying!"

It would sound a little bit like that. And that might be my prayer every other day. But there will be brighter prayers, too, where we pray, "Lord, I did good! Did You see me with Tommy today? I felt like You were reminding me to live well and love deeply in that situation and I'm thankful for the reminder!"

From this dialogue with God – honestly expressing who you are and how you feel – the "fruit of patience" can rearrange the clutter of your inner heart!

It's so important to know yourself, and know what is of the flesh and what is of God's Spirit – and sort through it with prayer! That's the biblical model for us today!

Live by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. (Galatians 5:16-17)

As we recognize the impurity and perversions in our lives ...we acknowledge these only because the Spirit of God brings them to mind *for the purpose* of setting you free from those influences that pollute and corrupt!

Constant prayer, friends! And I'm just talking about constant dialogue with God because you're in a relationship with Him. Don't wait for the end of the day to confess or repent of this moment's impatience or bitterness.

When Jesus was coming to the end of His ministry, He viewed Jerusalem from afar ...and **He began to weep**, and said, "**How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes.**" (Luke 19:41-42) He was speaking of His desire for the people of Jerusalem, God's chosen and beloved! But it was "too late!" He said. Judgement was coming! Judgement was inevitable!

Peace. Patience. Love. Joy. We're talking about having the mind of Christ; being made complete in Christ as we give Him time and space to live in us and through us!

Some of you are needing patience. You're "waiting" to hear from a job interview or waiting to hear from the lab analysis with your doctor. Let me encourage you to wait for the Lord: **Those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.** (Isaiah 40:31)